

STATE OF TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURIST DEVELOPMENT GEARS UP FOR FURTHER TOURISM GROWTH

Tourism is one of Tennessee's largest and most vibrant industries, employing more than 175,000 individuals and generating an economic impact of \$11.4 billion in 2004. Milestones have been achieved for Tennessee tourism, including taking the state domestic visitation ranking from 12th to 11th, increasing economic impact from \$10.8 billion to \$11.475 billion, and obtaining an additional \$4.5 million marketing funding from the Tennessee State Legislature in an effort to further stimulate tourism growth.

2005 was an exciting year, but 2006 brings new objectives and new goals to achieve. To lead those efforts and continue expansion of Tennessee tourism, Commissioner Susan Whitaker and her team have developed a strategic plan of action, implementing a new departmental structure and vision to support that plan. Whitaker deemed it necessary to restructure the department in an effort to be more efficient and responsive to the needs of both the industry partners and consumers, as well as to accomplish important education initiatives.

"One of the keys to our continued success will be communicating with our key stakeholders throughout the year," states Whitaker. "The travel industry has expressed a strong desire to become more engaged in the planning process; in response, we have created two distinct departments to ensure that occurs."

The two departments include Community and Industry Relations, now led by Assistant Commissioner Phyllis Qualls-Brooks, and Marketing, led by new addition, Assistant Commissioner Jennifer Spence.

Qualls-Brooks and her staff are charged with working closely with all industry stakeholders, including the statewide tourism industry, legislators, local government and business leaders, chambers of commerce officials, educators and other state tourism boards and agencies. Serving as a liaison between the department and these industry partners, Qualls-Brooks is responsible for communication efforts with the industry and issue-related matters of the department.

Spence will be responsible for the state's marketing efforts to the tourism consumer, including advertising, sales and communications.



THE TENNESSEE TOURISM ROUNDTABLE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OFFICERS PHOTOGRAPHED DURING RECENT MEETING IN NASHVILLE.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Walt Baker, TN Hotel & Lodging Association; Dave Perella, Chair; Susan Whitaker; Cindy Bruce, Executive Director; Gov. Bredesen; Carol Agee, TN Attractions Association; Ray Ogle, President, TN Lodging and Hotel Association; Ronnie Hart, Vice-Chair

Coming to the department with nearly 15 years experience in the marketing and tourism industry, Spence has established strong relationships with the tourism industry that will further strengthen the department's communication efforts. Most recently, Spence ran her own branding company, and previously served as Director of Marketing for Gaylord Attractions during her seven-year tenure at Gaylord Entertainment.

"My vision is that the industry will play an active role in state tourism planning with on-going dialogue creating effective communication," said Commissioner Whitaker. "This will help create the 'one voice' of the industry that we need to be effective. We want to be unified while remaining focused on making visiting Tennessee a must-see for travelers."

In addition to Commissioner Whitaker's effort to improve communication and strengthen her team, there are some important education initiatives to accomplish. "One of our objectives is to communicate what a powerhouse industry tourism is," Whitaker said. "We want educators, parents and students to be aware of all the career and business

opportunities that exist within the tourism industry. Assistant Commissioner Phyllis Qualls-Brooks' extensive background and experience in the field of education makes her perfectly suited to lead this effort."

ADDITIONAL STAFF CHANGES AS PART OF THE DEPARTMENT EXPANSION INCLUDE:

★ **Cindy Dupree, Director of Communications**

A veteran marketing and public relations executive, with four years in Corporate Relations in BMI's New York headquarters. Cindy is responsible for managing the in-house News Bureau's day-to-day operations while overseeing its continued transition.

★ **Nancy DeVille, Senior Editor** – A former journalist with *The Tennessean*, Nancy will work with tourism industry partners and the media to gather and distribute news about Tennessee through the news bureau.

★ **Nancy Hargiss-Tatlock, General Counsel** – Nancy is responsible for handling contract drafting, review and general legal matters for the department. Prior to joining our staff, she was a staff attorney with Nashville's Bass, Berry and Sims.

★ **Sharon Reed, Director of Personnel** – Sharon is a 26-year veteran of the State of Tennessee, most recently with the Tennessee Dept. of Safety. Sharon now directs the personnel management for the department and also assists in preparing the personnel portion of the budget.

AMERICAN BUS MARKETPLACE HEADS TO NASHVILLE

NASHVILLE - Travel and group tour industry representatives from across the country are preparing to gather in Nashville for the upcoming American Bus Association Marketplace 2006 Annual Convention.

The six-day meeting will convene Feb. 3-8 at the Gaylord Opryland Resort & Convention Center. It is expected that convention attendees will conduct more than \$35 million in travel and tourism business and secure contracts that will deliver hundreds of millions of dollars in future travel and tour business.

The ABA event is an opportunity for Tennessee's hundreds of tour operators and thousands of travel representatives to share the State's wide array of attractions, destinations, festivals and events.

One of the largest appointment shows in the industry, this year's event marks a return to Nashville, won through a bidding process. ABA Marketplace, which was held in Chicago last year and in New York in 2004, was previously hosted by Nashville in 1997. An estimated 2,650 delegates are expected to attend next month's gathering, which tops last year's attendance, ABA officials said.

Along with increasing bus business in the state by at least 10%, ABA officials also estimate delegates will spend more than \$4 million in the city while enjoying hosted tours that showcase the best venues Tennessee has to offer.

Peter Pantuso, president and chief executive officer of ABA, states, *"ABA estimates that Nashville, already a popular tour bus destination in North America, can expect to increase its group tourism business by ten to 25 percent as a result of hosting the show."*

Prior to the convention, attendees will have the opportunity to experience hotels, attractions and restaurants throughout Tennessee through four ABA Pre-Marketplace Tennessee Fam Tours. Hosted by the State of Tennessee Department of Tourist Development, the tours showcase the variety of gems our state offers, from Bristol to Memphis.

"This whets their appetite and gives tour operators a first hand look at the general hospitality, authenticity and beauty that Tennessee has to offer," said Lee Curtis, Director of Sales. *"By visiting various attractions and sites, operators will know what their groups will experience during future visits."*

While in Music City, attendees will be treated to some exclusive events including a visit to the world-famous Grand Ole Opry. An all-star line-up is planned for the Opry show, including Dierks Bentley, the Opry's newest member and Country Music Association's 2005 Horizon Award winner.

Commissioner Susan Whitaker, a co-chair on the host committee for the 2006 ABA Marketplace, recognizes the tremendous opportunity it is to showcase Tennessee to the motorcoach market.



"Nashville always does an outstanding job of hosting big conventions like the ABA, and when the tourism industry comes to town, the Tennessee tourism industry really pulls out all the stops," states Commissioner Whitaker. "Travel providers from all over the country will once again see what a wonderfully diverse entertainment product we have here. We want them to walk away knowing that the Stage is set in Tennessee for unforgettable vacations for all their customers."

Volunteers are needed to assist with important duties such as airport hospitality, information booths and other host city responsibilities. To receive a volunteer form, contact Leslie Davis at the Nashville CVB at leslie@musiccityusa.com.

The American Bus Association is the trade organization representing approximately 950 motorcoach owners and tour company members in the United States and Canada. Another 2,300 member organizations represent the travel and tourism industry and suppliers of bus product and services who work in partnership with the North American motorcoach industry.

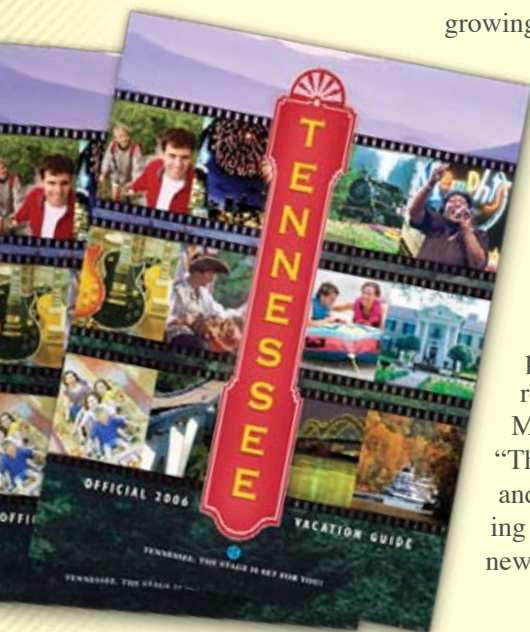
2006 TENNESSEE VACATION GUIDE AVAILABLE - EXPANDED WITH NEW AND IMPROVED FEATURES

As reported in the most recent issue of e-news, demand for the Tennessee Vacation Guide is on the rise. In an effort to continue to meet the requests of our ever-

growing tourism population,

we are pleased to report the release of our "new and improved" 2006 edition of the Tennessee Vacation Guide.

With a design emphasis that ties-in our recent State Tourism Marketing Campaign, "The Stage Is Set For You" and capturing the appealing design elements of our newly launched website



INDUSTRY APPLAUSE

- Congratulations to the recipients of the Middle East Tennessee Tourism Council's 2005 Excellence in Tourism Awards. Tourism organizations in Pigeon Forge, Gatlinburg, Townsend, Morristown, Monroe County, Oak Ridge, and Cocke County all received awards based on special products and services they provided in 2005.
- Northeast Tennessee will be well-known in Louisiana after the Kingsport Convention & Visitors Bureau was asked to participate in a panel discussion at that state's annual governor's conference. This honor was given to the Kingsport CVB, because of their commitment as a small market CVB to recruit sporting events as a way to build revenue.

www.tnvacation.com, the 2006 edition of the vacation guide is user friendly with a creative edge.

This year's book features eight additional pages and 500 new listings. The guide highlights a brand new reader-response system enabling the reader to request information directly from our industry partners. The 2006 Vacation Guide print-run increased by 50,000.

The newly re-designed book and advertising and editorial spreads also include enhanced Tennessee Trails coverage and city-finder map grids specific to each region.

To receive your copy of 2006 Tennessee Vacation Guide call 1-800-GO2TENN (800) 462-8366 or contact our office at (615) 741-2159 or by e-mail: fay.hicks@state.tn.us. For bulk orders please call (615) 741-9005 or e-mail: gladys.carr@state.tn.us.

TRAVEL TREND REPORTS AVAILABLE 1ST, 2ND AND 3RD QUARTERS OF '05

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development is pleased to provide the tourism industry with quarterly travel trend reports available on the department's website, www.tntourism.com under Research and Reports. These innovative reports are part



THE NASHVILLE ZOO ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO CLIMB. LAST YEAR, 513,561 GUESTS VISITED THE ZOO, WHICH IS A 4% INCREASE FROM 2004, AND THE HIGHEST IN THE ZOO'S HISTORY. MEMBERSHIPS ALSO INCREASED BY 26%, WITH MORE THAN 78,000 PEOPLE DECLARING TO BE FRIENDS OF THE ZOO.



of the department's on-going efforts to disseminate relevant information to the Tennessee travel industry. Offering these reports on-line provides easy access and increased manageability of the information.

These reports include data from both the first, second and third quarters of 2005 and are provided to show the most current trends for selected tourism activities. The data is provided by the Tennessee Department of Revenue. The availability of timely data focusing on revenue, state and local tax collections will give the travel industry the ability to monitor trends. These reports, however, are not intended to match the data presented in the "Economic Impact Report" prepared by TIA (Travel Industry Association of America).

As stated in our 2004 annual report, Tourism is the #1 (nonfarm) industry in our state. We hope these new reports will supply you with additional tools to better manage your tourism programs.



The Hermitage



Graceland

cess, the Society chooses the Top 20 events happening in the Southeast for each month of the year and publishes the list of winners quarterly.

For a complete list of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Events for the first quarter of 2006, visit

www.escapetotheseast.com.